

Europeans consider pesticide regulations

Golf course superintendents in the U.S. soon might find their European counterparts have fewer maintenance tools in their arsenal for tending turf. This leaves some wondering if the proposed regulations could be headed across the ocean.

The European Union is considering legislation (Proposals for a Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides) that would ban the use of plant protection products, or pesticides, in urban areas. The products could be considered a health risk.

"Parliament and the commission decided that placing pesticides on the market and

disposing of unused pesticides is well regulated, but they don't feel the actual use of registered products is adequately regulated," says Pat Kwiatkowski, Ph.D., head of global regulatory affairs for Bayer Environmental Science in Lyon, France. "This is the main purpose of the Framework Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides."

The framework directive being considered proposes to halt pesticide use in areas including public parks, sports grounds and playgrounds, but it doesn't specifically mention golf courses, which probably are a gray area.

Pitchcare, a British magazine for greenkeepers, has been reporting the issue and expressed concern about the effect it could have on the care of public areas including golf courses.

"The issue goes way beyond the availability of tools to effectively

manage the superb golf courses and sports pitches the U.K. is famous for the world over," writes Paul Cawood in a recent commentary. "It affects how weeds will be controlled in the streets. It affects how vegetation will be controlled in areas where safety is a critical issue, such as the highways and railways and other industrial areas depending on how 'public and amenity area' is defined."

If the directive becomes law, the only legal alternative left for greenkeepers will be hand weeding, which is too costly and labor-intensive, Cawood says.

Austen Sutton, global business support manager, turf and ornamentals for Syngenta, recently spoke at a Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment meeting in New Orleans and highlighted the implications of the proposed pesticide restrictions within the directive. He detailed the potential consequences the ban might have on the turf and amenity industry and its customers, who could lose the option to apply pesticides as part of their management programs. Pesticide companies that have a presence in Europe are closely watching the proposed European Union directive, which might be approved during the next two years, and are working with advocacy groups in EU member states to remain informed about any introduction of new legislation, Sutton says.

"Syngenta is fully behind the industry activity and following the formal lobbying process," he says.

The industry lobbying is

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focused on avoiding a complete restriction of pesticides use in public places and amending a number of other components of the proposed directive, Sutton says.

The ECPA, the European pesticide industry

association based in Brussels, has been lobbying with members of the European parliament about the legislation during the past months.

Yet the European and U.S. regulatory

processes are different.

"In the U.S., decisions are based on risk assessment, which means comparing exposure to the toxicity of the product; it's a decision of safety based on a quantified method," Kwiatkowski says. "There's also a recognition and assessment of risk vs. benefit for a product. This aspect has gone away to a great extent in Europe in the past few years."

While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency communicates regularly with its EU counterparts, the two bodies understand the differences between the regulation processes, Kwiatkowski says. She doesn't foresee the EPA looking at the EU's pesticide directive and following suit in the U.S. She bases this opinion on an EU water directive with respect to the risk of pesticides seeping into drinking water. That directive hasn't been considered in the U.S., and the EPA has no inclination to do so, she says.

Still, some fear antipesticide advocates in the U.S. will see the European directive as a viable option for the U.S.

"We have preemption at the state level here that would protect us to some degree, but the activist community has an agenda to overturn state and federal preemption," says Allen James, executive director of RISE.

Even if European restrictions aren't the impetus for U.S. regulations, bans and other rules have been put into place, and advocates will continue to push for further restrictions. U.S. pesticide users can help the cause by becoming more active in trade organizations and at the grassroots level, James says.

"Each company or golf course superintendent needs to take it upon himself to get involved," James says. "He shouldn't limit the focus just to his own segment. Harm to the lawn care industry, restrictions on road-care protection or failure to use pesticides properly on utility rights of way ultimately have adverse effects on golf courses because one area leads to another area being restricted."

An EU vote on the directive was expected Oct. 22. Kwiatkowski expects that sometime in the next three to six months there will be a finalized version, which will be publicized with a timeline for member states to follow.

"Now is the time for concerned industry advocates to express their concerns," she says.

- HW

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Catching a shark

Real-estate giant The St. Joe Co. recently sunk its teeth further into the golf industry. Shark's Tooth Golf Club in Lake Powell, Fla., is the newest course in the company's portfolio, joining Camp Creek, SouthWood, Victoria Hills Golf Clubs and St. John's Golf and Country Club and the Origins Course at WaterSound. As the club's staff becomes acquainted with its new owner, the benefits of being a part of a larger network become apparent.

The 18-hole, Greg Norman-designed course, which overlooks

Lake Powell, is an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Silver Signature Course that features more than 35 feet of natural elevation change and is home to 300-year-old live oak trees and a variety of wildlife and marine life.

"It has a very natural feel," says John Johnson, who has been general manager since the course opened in 2002. "It was designed with the player in mind and is enjoyable for players of all abilities."

The \$30-million deal was completed in August. While golfers won't notice much



change on the course as a result of the acquisition, the change of ownership offers the course a stronger network of support, Johnson says.

"We went from being a small club with ownership at a local level to part of a much bigger company with unlimited but greater resources," he says.

Shark's Tooth Golf Club in Lake Powell, Fla., is the newest golf property in The St. Joe Co.'s portfolio. Photo: Shark's Tooth Golf Club



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Shark's Tooth Golf Club intends to benefit from the marketing efforts of its new operator.



"There's a great information systems department, human resources department, strong accounting and a lot of energy focused on taking care of the membership of the club."

There are 260 members at Shark's Tooth. Besides members and their guests, guests of WaterColor and WaterSound luxury vacation rentals, including the WaterColor Inn & Resort, have access to the course. The 28-site Wild Heron housing community surrounds the course. The club offers different levels of membership, including full golf, corporate and social memberships.

Members, as well as course operators, can benefit from the St.

Joe arrangement, Johnson says. The courses have experimented with offering deals for golfing at more than one of the company's courses, says Will Hopkins, general manager of Camp Creek Golf Club in Watersound, Fla. Camp Creek is about 15 minutes from Shark's Tooth, so it would be feasible for golfers to go from one St. Joe course to another.

Beth Murphy, general manager of SouthWood Golf Club in Tallahassee, also sees the value of collaboration.

"We work within a broader goal than being simply bottom-line driven," Murphy says. "We're certainly here to run a business as practically and reasonably as we can, but we consider the

impact on the community and the overall goals. It's a diverse group of resources that we have to pull from."

Although SouthWood isn't a quick drive from the other St. Joe courses, it still benefits from being under the St. Joe umbrella with other courses, Murphy says. The company's marketing efforts serve SouthWood.

"Combining has been a win-win for us to do things jointly," she says. "The PR has helped us get recognition in publications, with our ratings and with getting golf tournaments out here."

Hopkins wouldn't be surprised

if St. Joe eventually buys more golf courses.

"The real estate market needs to catch up right now," he says, adding that even if the housing market is declining, the course will still benefit from the vacation traffic from WaterColor, which seems to be stable.

Johnson says his course should be able to benefit from the same traffic because of his new affiliation.

"Shark's Tooth was always maintained with a high standard, so we're excited that St. Joe will be able to continue with standard we've already established." – HW



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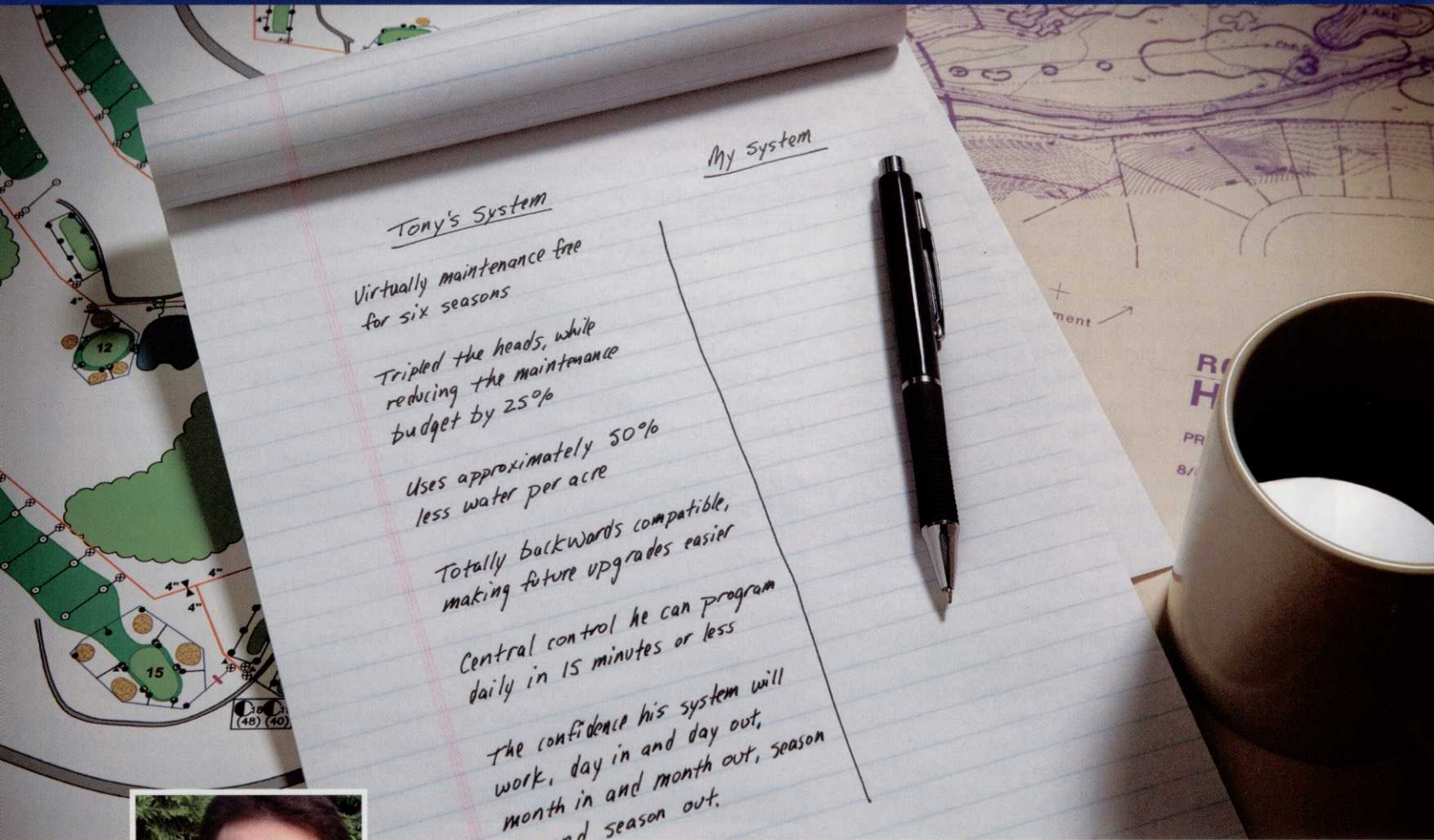
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Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing in Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. He can be reached at jackbrennan@tampabay.rr.com.

BE PREPARED FOR NEXT YEAR

“If you don't know where you're going, then any road will take you there.”

I don't remember the author of this quote, but it's a fitting beginning for a column attempting to define golf course marketing.

There's a misunderstanding that marketing is merely advertising. I receive inquiries from prospective clients explaining they need marketing help for their golf courses. In response, the first questions I want answered are: How much do you know about your market? How much do you know about your competition? Are you positioned properly based on the quality of the facility versus your pricing?

Surprisingly, while my clients try answering these questions, they often interrupt themselves to let me know the answers to them are unimportant. What they really want to know is what advertising they should be implementing, or to let me know they've tried everything and nothing works.

Advertising is a part of marketing, but marketing isn't advertising. Marketing is conducting research necessary to offer a product to an audience who likely will respond favorably.

Marketing includes all those research activities – competitor analysis, positioning, demographic growth analysis, economic growth analysis, consumer and facility demand analysis, supply versus demand, market growth/decline of supply, per capita play rates, play rates by type of golf facility, golfer participation, frequency of play per golfer, market age and household income analysis – that contribute to the development, pricing, communication and promotion of your golf course. Promotion is the marketing element, which includes advertising, used to communicate your course's message and offerings to prospective customers. Promotion also influences those potential golfers to play your course repeatedly.

Marketing also includes planning ahead. You can't determine where you need to be if you don't know where you are. The best

advice I can give at this time of the year: Be prepared for next year.

Every one of my client's is unique because they exist in a different marketplace. The basic research is the same, but you have to apply the interpretations of the research to the marketplace. For example, if I was working in Scottsdale, Ariz., a section of my marketing plan would focus on partnerships with hotels, motels and timeshares to reach potential customers. However, this relatively large portion of potential business and section of the marketing plan for a client in Scottsdale is worthless in rural Kentucky where my last client had no lodging facilities within 35 miles of the course.

If you've never written a marketing plan for your golf course, follow these five simple steps, and you'll have the beginnings of a dynamic marketing plan.

Step 1. Write down all business segments of play that you've been able to capture at your course this year. Include the number of rounds and revenue generated from each segment. (See table below.)

Example	Number	Revenue
Membership rounds	10,000	\$470,000
Outside play	14,000	\$714,000
Tournaments	3,000	\$156,000
Outings	2,000	\$104,000
League play	2,000	\$58,000

Step 2. Write down all the potential business segments of play that exist in your market that you can conceive: membership (full, single, social, etc.), outside play (weekday, weekend), tournaments/outings (social, charity, corporate, mini tours, pro events, etc.), league play, hotel play (transient, packages), special seniors, juniors (clinics, camps), etc.

If you can identify that the segment of play exists in your market place, write it down. Even if, for 2008, you know you

won't get that segment of play, write it down. Then find out how the club with that play is faring with that segment of business. For example, a segment of play that few clubs would have is a PGA Tour or Champions Tour event. But if that play exists in your market, call the pro, manager or owner and ask them how that play contributes to the success of their business. In this example, it might be that the event costs them money, and management offsets that cost with sales in a development. Now you know.

Try the same thing with all the segments of play until you know your golf market thoroughly. And, by doing this, you'll know your competition better, too.

Step 3. Focus on the play segments that currently demand play at your course. Then focus on the play that you're not getting, or not getting enough of, based on your competitors. Then conceive of promotional ways to better invite or solicit that segment of opportunity play.

Step 4. Create a promotional budget that you can justify for every segment of business you intend to capture. Don't think of the traditional forms of advertising such as newspaper, radio, magazines and TV only. For example, consider tournaments and outings. It might be as simple as recognizing you host a fair amount of charitable outings but not as much as your competition, and you realize none of the staff has ever solicited this business directly by phoning them. I almost guarantee your chamber of commerce has a listing of charitable organizations that you can get or buy. Most likely, you did business with one of them when they called you. Pick up the phone and call them before they call your competition.

Step 5. Repeat Step 4 over and over again.

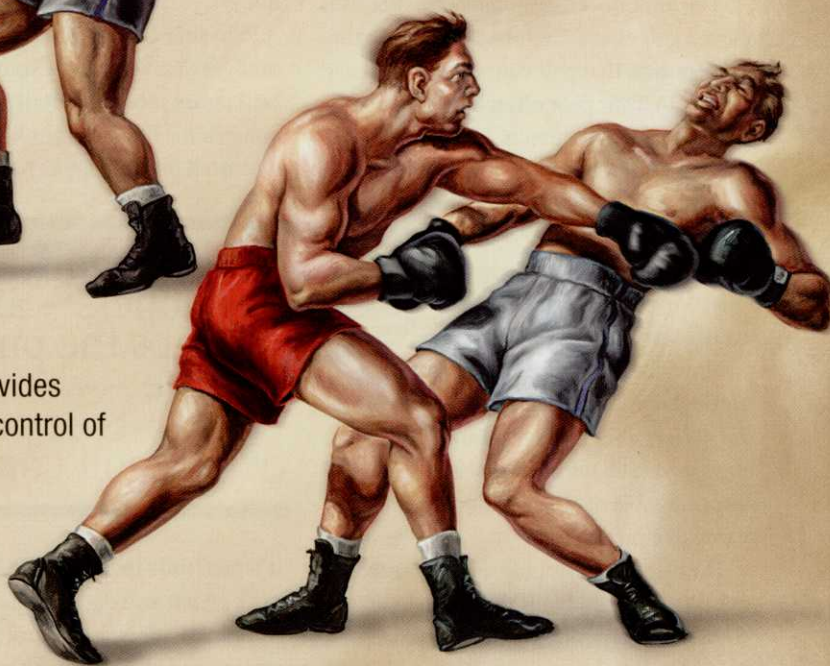
The perfect time for all your research and marketing reorganization is Thanksgiving through January 1 no matter where you're located. No one is in a buying mood, it's during the holidays, and the next year seems a long way off. Prepare then, and you'll be able to book more business between January 2 and Easter, which is prime selling season for all golf courses. **GCI**

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Jeffrey D. Brauer is a licensed golf course architect and president of GolfScapes, a golf course design firm in Arlington, Texas. Brauer, a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, can be reached at jeff@jeffreydrauer.com.

WHAT 'ARCHITECT' MEANS

As a long-time golf course architect and past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, I cringe when people overlook and understate the value of qualified golf course architects.

The announcement that Tiger Woods is now a golf course architect highlights the false notion that golf course design is easy. Top PGA Tour pros often have claimed to be golf course architects, and always will, as long as developers believe their names add marketing value. But are they really golf course architects? The concept of the Tour pro as golf course architect begs questions that rarely have been answered satisfactorily.

How does playing courses in events throughout the world apply to designing for golfers who play for leisure? Is Tiger's perspective about how to play a hole the least valuable of all, given he plays the game like no one else?

How does envisioning a high, butter-cut 6-iron spinning off the back slope translate to envisioning turning a deeply wooded or rocky area into a golf hole?

How does the idea of copying great holes they've seen work given different slopes, soils, grasses and vegetation – not to mention different owner pro formas, the addition of surrounding housing, environmental constraints, etc.?

Simply put, the technical and artistic visual skills of a golf course architect aren't the same skills needed for competitive golf. It's a full-time job and requires years of study and experience. And yet, golf developers – and perhaps the public at large – want to believe Tour pros design golf courses. In fact, only a few – Jack Nicklaus and fellow ASGCA member Mark McCumber – are among the exceptions who are very involved in design.

Take note of Nicklaus' comments during a recent President's Cup news conference. As the player who has made the most successful transition from player to architecture, he said he doesn't think Tiger is a golf course architect, at least not yet.

"I'm sure he has great ideas," Nicklaus said. "He's a very smart young man, and he'll figure it out. But it depends, at this point in his life, whether he'll be doing it himself or lending his name or both."

And yet, golf developers – and perhaps the public at large – want to believe Tour pros design golf courses.

It'll take time to figure out. He certainly can't go out and do a design himself. He wouldn't understand that. He wouldn't understand all the things that happen with it. It takes time to learn that. Can he make an input? Absolutely, he can make an input, and he'll grow."

In that news conference, Jack said:

- He felt like a consultant for about 10 years;
- Many of his early designs require renovation now;
- It took a while to stop designing for his game and to focus on designing for average golfers;
- He has worked with more than 20 ASGCA members to learn the craft.

I agree with Jack's self evaluation (I felt like an architect after seven years of apprenticeship before starting my own business, and I would love to

renovate some early designs.) I also agree with his opinions about Tiger's career path. In the beginning, Tiger most likely will be lending his name to his design projects more than actually designing them. The time demands of trying to win 18 majors don't mesh with those of trying to design 18 holes.

I hope Tiger eventually follows Jack's path of being an apprentice in his own design company that's been built with talented golf course architects, providing he gives them due credit. While Tiger might always leave much of the difficult work to his staff, if he devotes considerable time to it, he will earn the golf course architect title someday. I hope he ignores the examples of other Tour pros, most of whom are best known in the design world for:

- Attaching their name to several golf course architecture firms – sometimes simultaneously, meaning quality might vary.
- Not knowing their staff. At a recent interview, a famous pro asked his agent, "What's the name of the guy who works with us?"
- Not being able to find the first tee at grand opening.

The above examples hint at how much involvement those pros have in their "signature" projects. Based on what I know about him, Tiger will beat them in architecture as soundly as he beats them in golf. He probably deserves it – and I know they do. **GC**

